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FM AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5170
INFO RUCNFUR/DARFUR COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RHMFISS/CJTF HOA PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KHARTOUM 002643

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DEPARTMENT FOR AF/SPG AND AF/SE

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/07/2016
TAGS: [PREF](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [SU](#) [UN](#) [NO](#)
SUBJECT: DARFUR: NRC TO CLOSE PROGRAM IN SOUTH

Classified By: P/E Chief E. Whitaker, Reason: Sections 1.4 (b) and (d)

11. (C) The Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) will publicly announce the closure of its operations in South Darfur on November 8. In a meeting with Embassy staff prior to the announcement, NRC Country Director Lotte Grauballe said that operations have been suspended five times in the last two years after the Sudanese government had barred access to camps without explanation. NRC coordinates basic services for approximately 300,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) in several camps in South Darfur in addition to monitoring the human rights situation, work that Grauballe asserted is not being done effectively by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA). The NRC will lay-off 185 staff members as part of the closure, including 170 Sudanese nationals. Grauballe said that the NRC would not resume operations unless the Sudanese government agreed to specific written conditions that would allow the organization to fulfill its mandate.

12. (C) The NRC hopes its closure in South Darfur will draw greater attention to the Sudanese government's increasing efforts to limit international access to IDP camps in the region. "We are conceding defeat now but not conceding the war," said Grauballe. She added that international organizations were "scared and tired" as a result of government harassment, and she doubted that they would express any solidarity with NRC's position. Grauballe also warned that the Sudanese government may use ongoing janjaweed attacks as a pretext to construct permanent housing units in Otash camp near Nyala, in effect resettling the IDPs from their original areas.

13. (SBU) On November 6, NRC Secretary General Tomas Colin Archer sent an impassioned letter to Minister of Humanitarian Affairs Kosti Manibe, which detailed Sudanese obstructionism and announced the NRC's closure. The text of the letter is as follows:

(Begin text)

Minister of Humanitarian Affairs
Hon. Kosti Manibe
Khartoum
Sudan

c.c. Humanitarian Special Representative of the Secretary
General, Mr. Manuel Aranda Da Silva
Ambassador of Norway, Mr. Fridtjov Thorkildsen

Oslo, 6th November 2006

Re: NRC's presence in South Darfur

Dear Sir,

As you are well aware, the humanitarian work of the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) in South Darfur has been suspended since 3rd September 2006.

Since NRC started its humanitarian programme in South Darfur in mid 2004, our activities have been suspended by the authorities no less than five times. In total, NRC's humanitarian work has been suspended for 210 days during this period. No explanation has been provided by the authorities, clarifying why NRC is suspended.

On each occasion, NRC has sought a dialogue with the responsible authorities, both in Nyala and in Khartoum. We have also reiterated our commitment to carry on with the humanitarian work in the State. Recognising that NRC works in South Darfur at the invitation of the Government of Sudan, NRC have done all in our power to maintain the best of relations with the Sudanese authorities.

On 19th and 21st October, 2006, respectively, I held meetings with the Deputy Governor of South Darfur, his Excellency the State Minister for Khartoum, and the Commissioner of HAC. These meetings were cordial and fruitful.

The main outcome of the meetings was that NRC was promised a clear communication from the Sudanese authorities regarding the future status of NRC's humanitarian work in South Darfur no later than one week after Eid.

However, since my return to Norway, there has been no reciprocation by the authorities at any level to my request for dialogue concerning the underlying reasons for the continuous suspension of NRC activities. Today, more than one week has passed since Eid, and despite the reassurances

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from the State Minister for Khartoum, I have not received the expected communication regarding NRC's future status in South Darfur.

What has been brought to my attention since my departure from Khartoum is the fact that NRC has now also been denied access to Otash camp near Nyala, despite having been invited by the authorities to respond to the pressing humanitarian needs in this camp.

The current working conditions accorded to NRC in South Darfur are not conducive. The frequent disruption of our humanitarian work, resulting in important resources lying idle for months on end, will force NRC to pull out of South Darfur.

In the absence of clear communication from the Sudanese authorities, I have instructed our country Director in Sudan to start preparations for the closure of NRC's programme in South Darfur.

Having repeatedly stressed that NRC is prepared to enter into dialogue with the Sudanese authorities regarding the resumption of our humanitarian work in South Darfur, this decision has been the most difficult I have had to make as Secretary General of NRC because we are all aware that the

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humanitarian needs are greater than ever in South Darfur.

Your sincerely,
Norwegian Refugee Council
Tomas Colin Archer
Secretary General

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(End text)
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